

The Capital Budget Committee held a meeting at 6:00pm on Wednesday September 1st, 2021 over Zoom.

The following members were present:

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| Edward J. Forsberg (Chair) | Justin Haner |
| Josette Burke (Secretary) | Leah McGuill |
| Cheryl Caron | Scott Wassel |
| Noreen Gordon | |

No members were absent

Also in attendance were Assistant Town Administrator Patrick Shield, Town Administrator James Johnson, School Superintendent Dr. Bridget Gough, School Business Administrator Michael Friscia, School Committee Chairperson William Buckley, School Committee Vice Chairperson Kristen Syrek, School Committee Member Nancy Gallivan, DPW Director Rick Mattson, Building Maintenance Director Don Anderson, and Water Superintendent Scott Gustafson.

The meeting was called to order by Edward J. Forsberg at 6:01PM

The Capital Budget Committee heard funding requests from the following departments:

School Department Requests

Walpole High School Driveway Extension: School Business Administrator Michael Friscia presented his department's request for \$600,000 to extend the high school's driveway. The line of parents picking up students after school is always too long, extending out onto Common Street and blocking the visibility of pedestrians for passing traffic. The dangerous situation that this creates would be partially avoided if the school's driveway received an extension to fit more cars, ideally before next school year begins.

Traffic Study Elm Street School: A request for \$10,000 to conduct a study into the best solution to the traffic problem near the Elm Street School. The school's loading area is currently unable to support the capacity of cars during drop-off and pickup hours, creating a backup on Route 27 that impedes traffic. Once the solution is determined, more funds will likely need to be allocated towards the design and construction of the project.

Playground Renovations: A request for \$200,000 to renovate the playground areas of all four Walpole elementary schools (\$50,000 per school). These four structures are each about ten years old and suffer safety issues. The new structures would be ADA compliant and construction would need to adhere to liability/safety regulations, hence the seemingly high price.

Classroom Blinds Replacement: A request for \$95,000 to replace the window blinds in several classrooms across the town's several schools. Classroom dimming is a necessary component to the usage of LCD Projectors that many teachers utilize, and many of the current blinds need replacement.

Cafeteria Table Replacement for Four Elementary Schools: A request for \$50,000 to replace old folding cafeteria tables in the town's elementary schools. They are used for lunchtime and seating during assemblies / performances, and fold up for ease of floor cleaning.

Special Education Van Replacement: A request for \$35,000 to replace the Special Education department's two small Ford Escape vans. They are considering purchasing electric vehicles to be more environmentally friendly and cost less in fueling expenses.

Walpole High School Retaining Wall Replacement: \$180,000 construct a new exterior wall in the front of the Walpole High School. The current brick wall is starting to crumble and allow water to drip through and cause more damage to the structure.

Replacement of Softball Scoreboard at BMS: A request for \$20,000 to replace the Bird Middle School softball field's electronic scoreboard. The current (decades-old) scoreboard's remote control no longer works, so changing the score during games has been difficult.

Middle School Building Project Presentation

Superintendent Dr. Bridget Gough gave a brief update on the proposed new middle school construction project. The total budget is estimated at \$116 Million, to be paid for by a thirty-year borrowing plan (average of \$438 per household per year). The MSBA Board unanimously approved the design on August 25th, and the project will be approved at the Fall Town Meeting and put to a vote in November. If all goes according to plan, it will be completed by Fall 2024.

Building Maintenance Department Requests

Blackburn Hall Building Improvements: Building Maintenance Superintendent Don Anderson presented his department's request for \$425,000 for improvements to the Blackburn Hall civic center. First, they want to replace the deteriorating slate roof with a more durable metal roof. Second, they want to install air conditioning units in the upper gym.

Town Hall Electrical Generator: A request for \$275,000 to replace the town hall's electric generator and upgrade the electrical system. The current generator is too small and can only power the lower level of the town hall.

Old Post School Building Improvements: A request for \$200,000 to redesign the Old Post Elementary School's media center. The plan is to put in a new floor, get rid of the stationary book cases, and add mobile bookcases that can be easily moved to reconfigure the space for various activities.

High School Roof Replacement: A request for \$245,000 to replace the part of Walpole High School's roofing. The roof is being replaced in phases, and this stretch is located in the rear above the language wing.

Equipment Emergency Repairs: A request for \$50,000 to go into the school's emergency funds in case of unexpected equipment failure or breakdown. In the case that the school's generator or boiler breaks down, this fund will quickly pay for repairs without affecting the school's operating budget.

Old Town Hall Painting and Demo: A request for \$285,000 to improve the old town hall building (currently the offices of the Emergency Management Department and the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)). The plan is to repaint the bell tower and refurbish the interior to make it look more presentable. The Finance Committee only recommended \$130,000 for this project, and if that were the budget, Don Anderson would focus on repainting the bell tower.

Recommendation Discussion and Voting

After hearing the last of the department requests, the Capital Budget Committee debated and voted on their final budget recommendations. They discussed the following items:

-Street Light Conversion: Edward J. Forsberg placed a hold on the Highway Department's \$800,000 request for convert the town's street lights to LED. He asked why they'd be spending \$200,000 on lights that they are replacing. DPW Rick Mattson said he tried negotiating with Eversource, and that was the price they agreed on. Edward J. Forsberg released the hold.

-Retirement System Assessment Study: Josette Burke placed a hold on the Select Board's \$50,000 request for a study into the merits of switching from the Norfolk County's retirement system to the state's. She said that after reading the legal opinion on the subject, it seems clear that this would be a waste of money. Scott Wassel and Cheryl Caron agreed that the money would be better spent elsewhere.

MOTION MADE by Ed Forsberg to recommend \$0 for the Retirement Assessment Study. Seconded by Josette Burke. The motion passed (7-0-0).

-NLC REAL Equity and Diversity Training: Scott Wassel placed a hold on the Select Board's \$15,000 request for the National League of Cities' Race Equity and Leadership (REAL) Training. He thought that the money would be better spent elsewhere. Justin Haner respectfully disagreed, asserting that the town would greatly benefit from racial equity training, citing the example of Walpole High School recently having to rebrand its mascot from the Rebels to the Timberwolves. Ed Forsberg expressed that he too was in favor for this training. Scott Wassel released the hold.

-2007 Ford Ranger Replacement: Justin Haner placed a hold on the Vehicle Maintenance Department's \$28,000 request to replace one of their 2007 Ford Rangers. He argued that this one has a lower mileage than the other vehicles the department wants to replace, so this particular request can be pushed off for a couple years when more electric vehicles become available. DPW Director Rick Mattson clarified that

the reason they want to replace this vehicle is because of the amount of rust that has accumulated on the frame. **Justin Haner released the hold.**

-Special Education Van Replacement: Scott Wassel placed a hold on the School Department's \$35,000 request to replace the special education van with an electric vehicle, just to show favor and say that if there's any extra spending money left over, this is a good place to funnel it. Justin Haner agreed. School Business Administrator mentioned how the Special Education Van would return on its investment by reducing the school's reliance on a private transportation company. **Scott Wassel released the hold.**

-Sewer System Expansion 1.0: Edward J. Forsberg placed a hold on the Sewer Department's **\$1,525,5000** request to extend sewer piping along Route 1A. He pointed out that this would only service 21 new homes and the high cost would not be worth the result. Water Superintendent Scott Gustafson clarified that these sections are part of the Sewer Master Plan update, and they are only prioritizing them now because there is already construction happening on Route 1A. Doing this project now would save money on tearing up and repaving the road in the future. Edward J. Forsberg worried that the potential betterment cost placed on the homeowners would be too high a burden. **Edward J. Forsberg released the hold.**

-Old Town Hall Painting and Demo: Cheryl Caron placed a hold on the Building Maintenance Department's **\$285,000** request to paint and refurbish the old town hall building. The Finance Committee only recommended **\$130,000** for this project. Cheryl Caron suggested adding the **\$50,295** originally requested to fund the Retirement System Assessment Study to this budget.

MOTION MADE by Cheryl Caron to recommend **\$180,295** to the Old Town Painting and Demo item. Seconded by Scott Wassel. The motion passed (7-0-0).

After these changes, the amount of funds for Articles 6-13 were calculated and voted upon.

MOTION MADE by Scott Wassel to pass Article 6 with **\$4,390,000** in free cash and **\$27,295** in appropriation from previous projects. Seconded by Josette Burke. The motion passed (7-0-0).

MOTION MADE by Cheryl Caron to pass Article 7 with **\$1,059,785** in free cash and **\$263,008** in appropriation from previous projects. Seconded by Josette Burke. The motion passed (7-0-0).

MOTION MADE by Edward J. Forsberg to pass Article 8 with **\$64,900** in free cash and **\$771,099** in appropriation from Chapter 90. Seconded by Cheryl Caron. The motion passed (7-0-0).

MOTION MADE by Edward J. Forsberg to pass Article 9 with **\$1,825,000** from General Fund Borrowing. Seconded by Scott Wassel. The motion passed (7-0-0).

MOTION MADE by Noreen Gordon to pass Article 10 with **\$911,000** in Water Retained Earnings. Seconded by Josette Burke. The motion passed (7-0-0).

MOTION MADE by Josette Burke to pass Article 11 with **\$1,020,000** in Sewer Retained Earnings. Seconded by Cheryl Caron. The motion passed (7-0-0).

MOTION MADE by Scott Wassel to pass Article 12 with **\$2,800,000** from Water Borrowing. Seconded by Cheryl Caron. The motion passed (7-0-0).

MOTION MADE by Cheryl Caron to pass Article 13 with **\$1,525,500** from Sewer Borrowing. Seconded by Josette Burke. The motion passed (7-0-0).

MOTION MADE by Edward J. Forsberg to adjourn. Seconded by Scott Wassel. The motion passed (7-0-0).

The Capital Budget Committee adjourned at 8:20pm.